



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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## **Whatcom County dairies fined for manure spills**

**OLYMPIA** – Two Whatcom County dairies have been fined by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) for manure spills that polluted waters and endangered fish or shellfish.

The largest penalty – \$9,000 – was issued to Arlyn Visser, of Clearbrook Holsteins in Sumas. The fine is the result of a manure spill in April that killed at least 30 fish and threatened salmon spawning beds. The spill occurred when manure overflowed a lagoon and flowed into a wetland, eventually making its way into a tributary of the Sumas River.

The second penalty of \$7,000 was issued to Rod Erickson, of Ro-Dar Farms in Ferndale. The shellfish beds in Drayton Harbor were closed for two weeks in April after a manure runoff from Erickson's farm flowed across a field, into an adjacent road ditch and then into California Creek, contaminating the shellfish beds.

The spills were investigated and confirmed by an inspector with WSDA's Livestock Nutrient Management Program. The state Department of Agriculture was given responsibility for managing the state's livestock nutrient management program in July 2003 by the state Legislature. This is only the second and third time since then that there has been a discharge significant enough to warrant a hefty fine, according to Nora Mena, the program manager.

"Both Mr. Visser and Mr. Erickson were very cooperative in working with us to correct the problems that caused the spills," Mena said. "But because of the amount of manure spilled and the environmental and economic damage that occurred as a result, we felt there had to be a serious, monetary consequence."

The two dairy producers were sent a Notice of Penalty last week. They have two options to contest the penalty: they can either submit a written explanation of why the department should reduce or cancel the fine or they can file an appeal with the Pollution Control Hearings Board.

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